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PRINTED IN CANADA.

C.I.A. HEADQUARTERS, CIRCA 2005 A.D.

AGENT JOHN FOSTER PARNES HAS A SQUEAKY-CLEAN DUDLEY-DO-RIGHT KIND OF WAY, AND AN IRRITATING AIR OF BOYSCOUT OPTIMISM THAT CONSTANTLY SURROUNDS HIM.

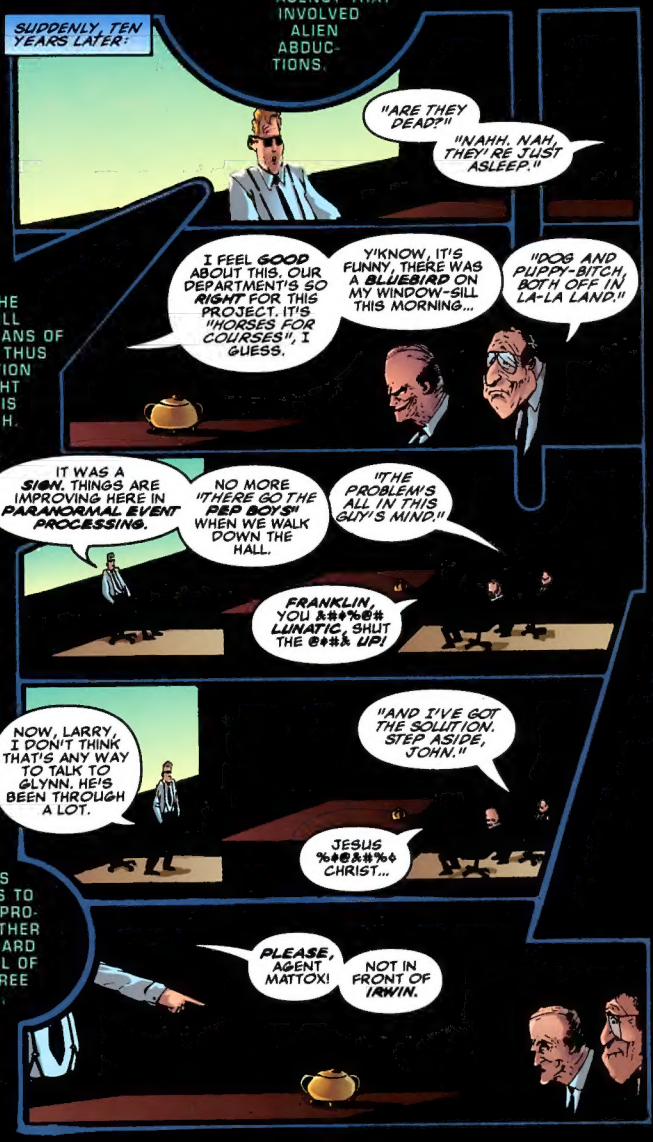
AGENT GLYNN FRANKLIN STARES INTO THE EMPTY SPACE IN FRONT OF HIM AND MUMBLES TO HIMSELF DISJOINTEDLY. THREE YEARS AGO FRANKLIN WAS DRIVEN MAD ON A CASE FOR THE AGENCY THAT INVOLVED ALIEN ABDUCTIONS.

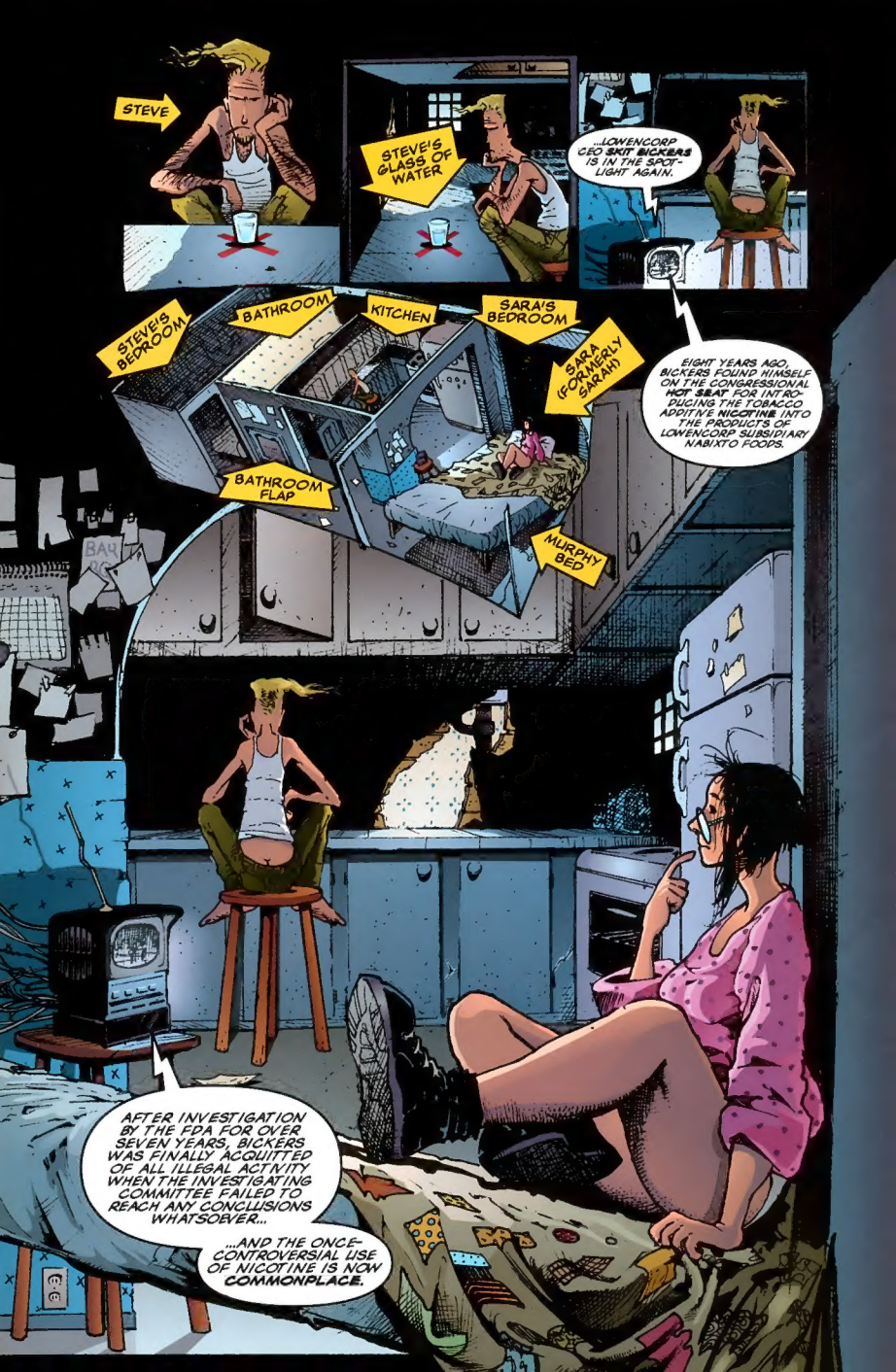
AGENT LARRY MATTOX HAS VERY HIGH COPING ABILITIES AND VERY LOW SOCIAL SKILLS, WHICH IS TO SAY THAT WHILE HE'S A VERY GOOD AGENT, HE'S PERSONALLY OBNOXIOUS AND HATES EVERYONE.

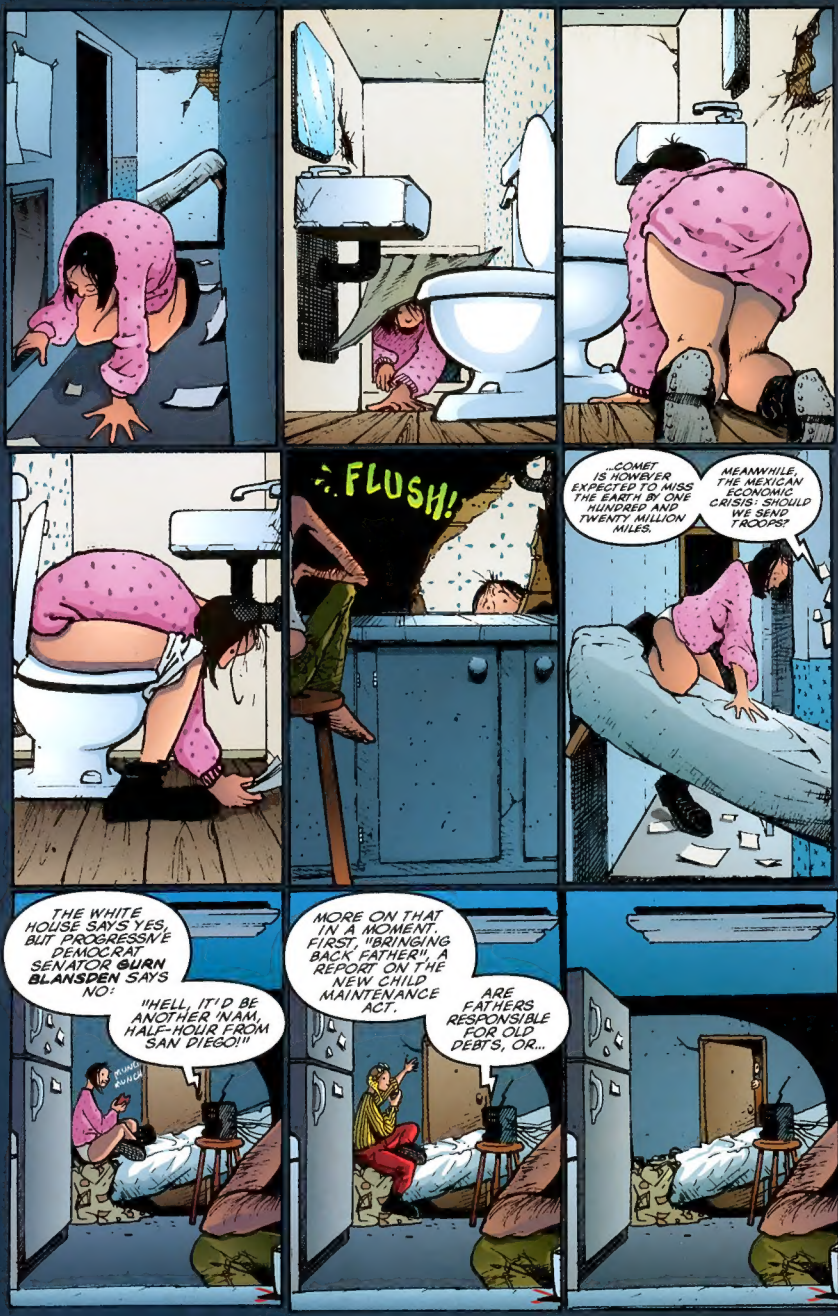
THE URN CONTAINS THE ASHES OF THE FORMER HEAD OF PARANORMAL EVENT PROCESSING AT THE C.I.A., MAJOR IRWIN ROSTEVAL. ROSTEVAL SPONTANEOUSLY COMBUSTED DURING A PARTICULARLY UGLY CASE INVOLVING CATTLE-MUTILATION IN WISCONSIN THE PREVIOUS JULY. HE IS, HOWEVER, STILL APPROACHABLE BY MEANS OF A OUIJA BOARD, AND THUS CONTINUES TO FUNCTION AS THE GUIDING LIGHT AND MENTOR OF THIS AGENCY SUB BRANCH.

THE WALL IS A FLICKERING MOVING COLLAGE OF IMAGES THAT CONSTANTLY SHIFT AND FLOW INTO SURREAL CONFIGURATIONS. THIS IS AN EFFECT OF THE WALL-SIZED IMAGING SCREENS THAT ROSTEVAL HAD INSTALLED BEFORE HE COMBUSTED. TRUTH BE TOLD, THEY DON'T ACTUALLY DO MUCH EXCEPT LOOK COOL AND BIZARRE, WHICH IS PROBABLY WHY THE SLIGHTLY DEMENTED MAJOR WANTED THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE.

MAJOR ROSTEVAL WAS GAY, AND CONTINUES TO HARBOR THE SAME PROCLIVITIES ON THE OTHER SIDE. HIS OUIJA BOARD MESSAGES ARE FULL OF INNUENDO. THE THREE SURVIVING AGENTS, OUT OF RESPECT AND PROFESSIONAL LOVE FOR THEIR DEPARTED CHIEF, ATTEMPT TO IGNORE THIS.

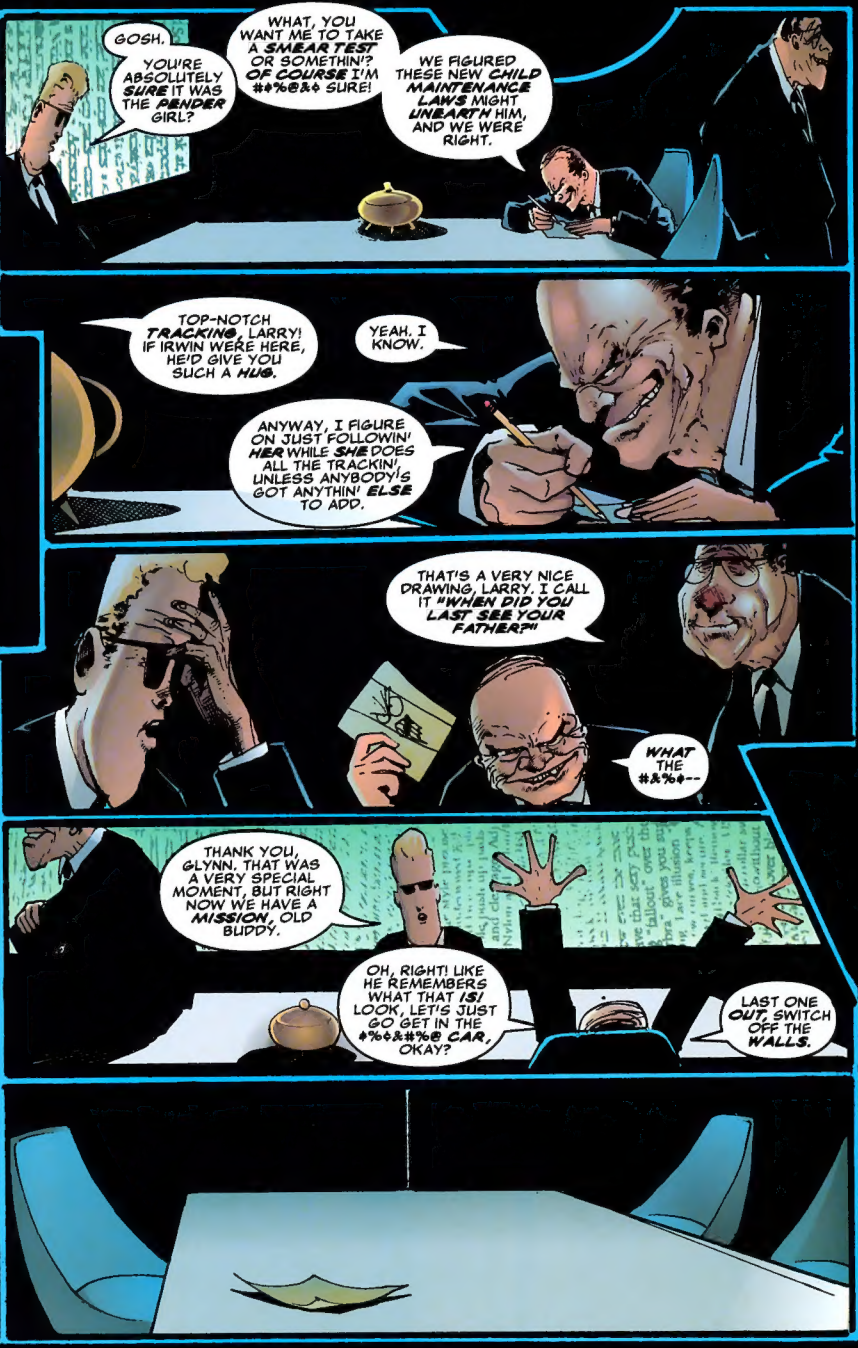

SUDDENLY, TEN YEARS LATER:
"ARE THEY DEAD?"
"NAHH. NAH, THEY'RE JUST ASLEEP."
I FEEL GOOD ABOUT THIS. OUR DEPARTMENT'S SO RIGHT FOR THIS PROJECT. IT'S "HORSES FOR COURSES", I GUESS.
Y'KNOW, IT'S FUNNY, THERE WAS A BLUEBIRD ON MY WINDOW-SILL THIS MORNING...
"DOGS AND PUPPY-BITCH, BOTH OFF IN LA-LA LAND."
IT WAS A SIGN. THINGS ARE IMPROVING HERE IN PARANORMAL EVENT PROCESSING.
NO MORE "IT'S THERE GO THE PEP BOYS!" WHEN WE WALK DOWN THE HALL.
"IT'S THE PROBLEM'S ALL IN THIS GUY'S MIND."
FRANKLIN, YOU &##%@# LUNATIC, SHUT THE @##& UP!
NOW, LARRY, I DON'T THINK THAT'S ANY WAY TO TALK TO GLYNN. HE'S BEEN THROUGH A LOT.
"AND I'VE GOT THE SOLUTION. STEP ASIDE, JOHN."
JESUS %#@&#%# CHRIST...
PLEASE, AGENT MATTOX!
NOT IN FRONT OF IRWIN.


STEVE
STEVE'S GLASS OF WATER
...LOWENCORP CEO SKIT BICKERS IS IN THE SPOTLIGHT AGAIN.
EIGHT YEARS AGO, BICKERS FOUND HIMSELF ON THE CONGRESSIONAL "HOT SEAT" FOR INTRODUCING THE TOBACCO ADDITIVE NICOTINE INTO THE PRODUCTS OF LOWENCORP SUBSIDIARY NABIXTO FOODS.
STEVE'S BEDROOM
BATHROOM
KITCHEN
SARA'S BEDROOM
SARA (FORMERLY SARAH)
BATHROOM FLAP
MURPHY BED
AFTER INVESTIGATION BY THE FDA FOR OVER SEVEN YEARS, BICKERS WAS FINALLY ACQUITTED OF ALL ILLEGAL ACTIVITY WHEN THE INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE FAILED TO REACH ANY CONCLUSIONS WHATSOEVER...
...AND THE ONCE-CONTROVERSIAL USE OF NICOTINE IS NOW COMMONPLACE.


FLUSH!
...COMET IS HOWEVER EXPECTED TO MISS THE EARTH BY ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY MILLION MILES.
MEANWHILE, THE MEXICAN ECONOMIC CRISIS: SHOULD WE SEND TROOPS?
THE WHITE HOUSE SAYS YES, BUT PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRAT SENATOR BURN BLANSDEN SAYS NO:
"HELL, IT'D BE ANOTHER 'NAM, HALF-HOUR FROM SAN DIEGO!"
MORE ON THAT IN A MOMENT. FIRST, "BRINGING BACK FATHER", A REPORT ON THE NEW CHILD MAINTENANCE ACT.
ARE FATHERS RESPONSIBLE FOR OLD DEBTS, OR...

SARA!
HEY, SARA!
SARA, WE HAVE TO TALK...
NORBERT, I DON'T KNOW YOU. GO NAG SOMEBODY ELSE.
WELFAR
OFFICE

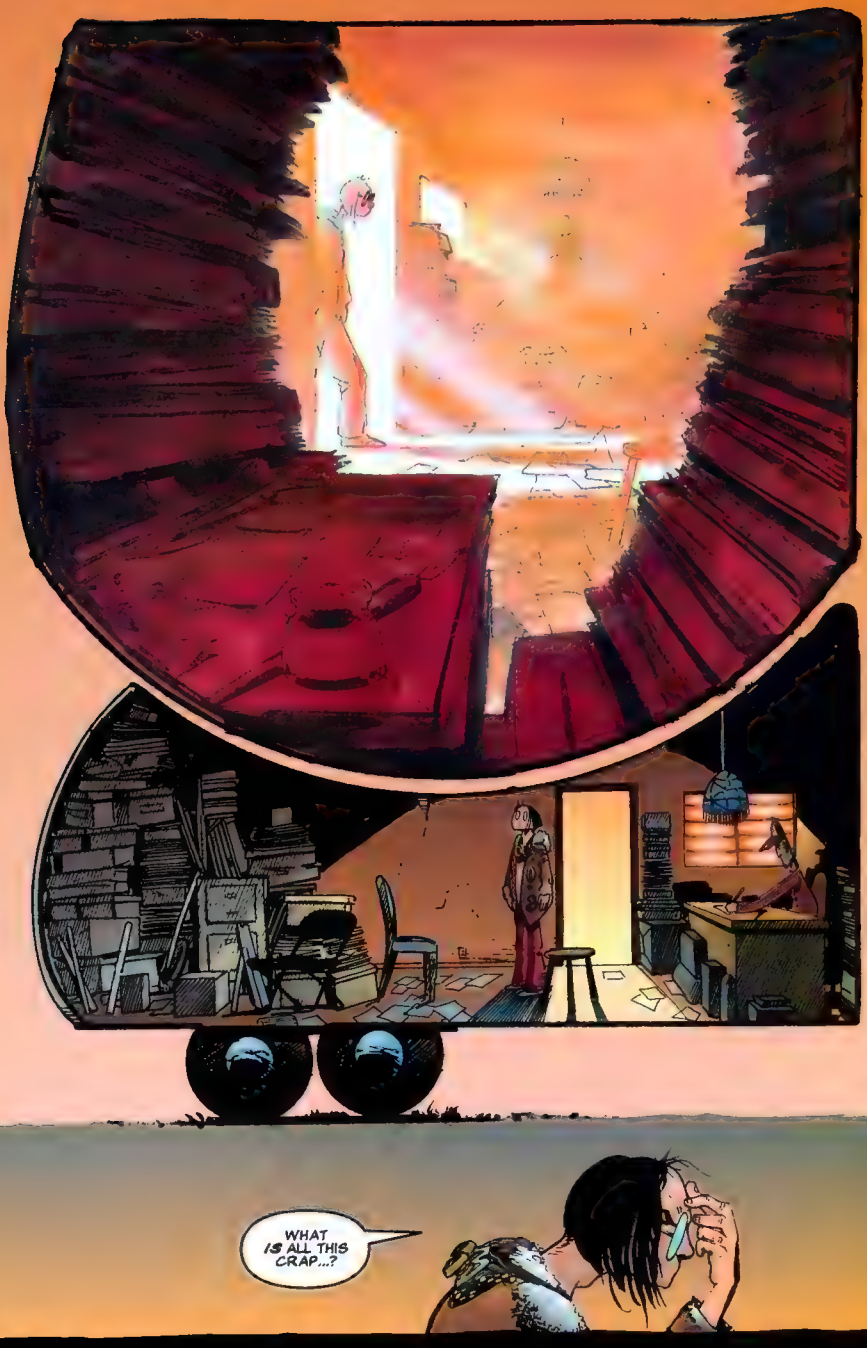
LOOK, I JUST WANT MY CHECK, OKAY?
THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE. THE NEW CHILD MAINTENANCE ACT MAKES YOUR FATHER RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR UPKEEP, RATHER THAN THE STATE.
ARE YOU KIDDING? I'M TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD!
MAYBE SO, BUT THE LAW'S RETROACTIVE. FOR SEVERAL YEARS YOUR FATHER WAS RESPONSIBLE BUT LET THE STATE SUPPORT YOU. IT'S LIKE BACK TAXES.
WAIT A MINUTE--ME, GET MONEY OFF MY FATHER? ME AND MOM DIDN'T EVEN WANT CONTACT WITH MY FATHER...
THAT'S TOO BAD, HONEY, BECAUSE HE'S WHERE YOU GET YOUR HANDOUTS FROM NOW ON.
NEXT, PLEASE.
I DON'T #@&%♦♦ BELIEVE THIS!
I NEED EIGHT DOLLARS FOR A QUART OF FOOD.

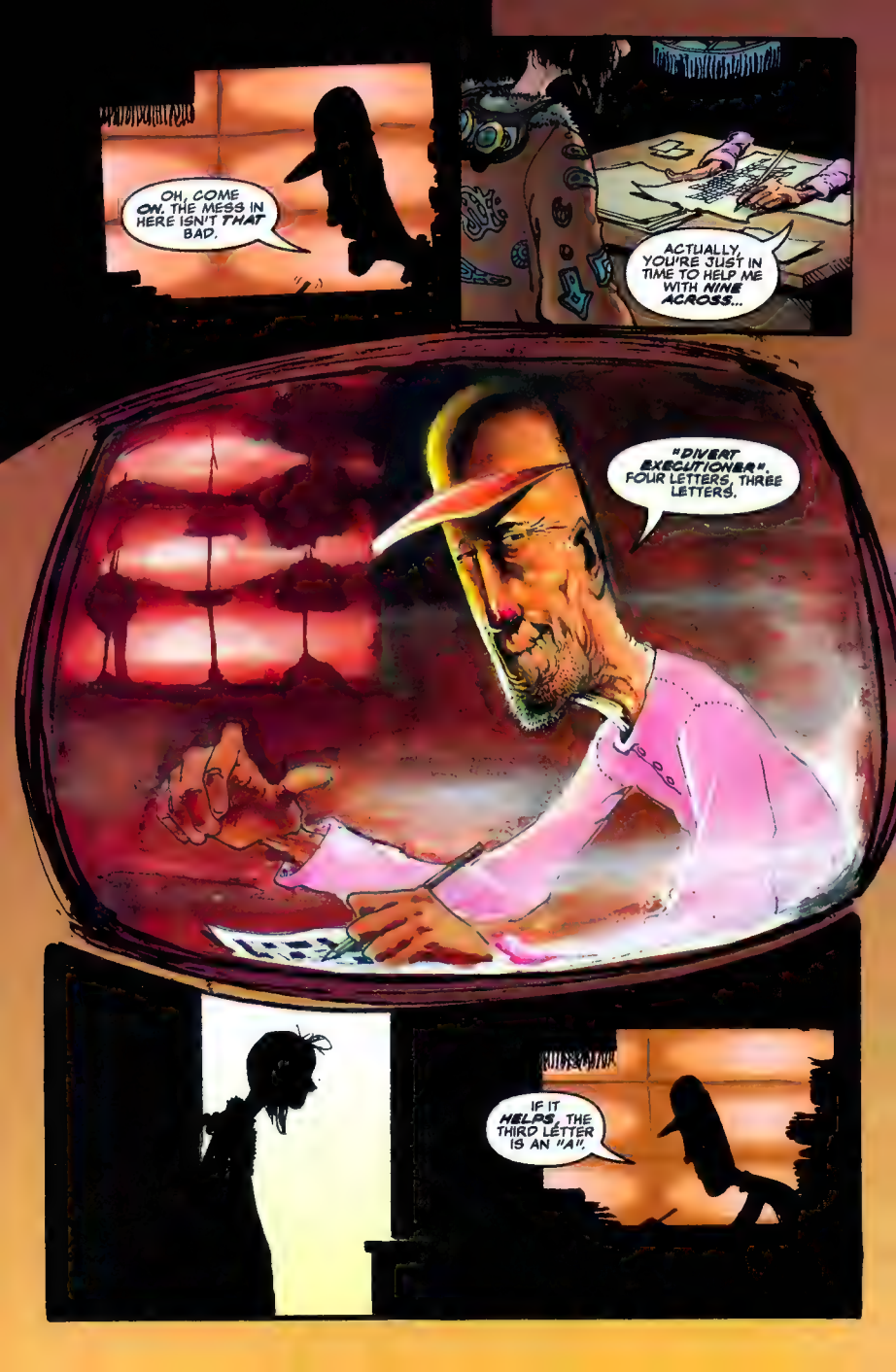

GOSH.
YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY SURE IT WAS THE PENDER GIRL?
WHAT, YOU WANT ME TO TAKE A SMEAR TEST OR SOMETHIN'? OF COURSE I'M #+%@&+ SURE!
WE FIGURED THESE NEW CHILD MAINTENANCE LAWS MIGHT UNEARTH HIM, AND WE WERE RIGHT.
TOP-NOTCH TRACKING, LARRY! IF IRWIN WERE HERE, HE'D GIVE YOU SUCH A HUG.
YEAH, I KNOW.
ANYWAY, I FIGURE ON JUST FOLLOWIN' HER WHILE SHE DOES ALL THE TRACKIN'. UNLESS ANYBODY'S GOT ANYTHIN' ELSE TO ADD.
THAT'S A VERY NICE DRAWING, LARRY. I CALL IT "WHEN DID YOU LAST SEE YOUR FATHER?"
WHAT THE #&%+--
THANK YOU, GLYNN. THAT WAS A VERY SPECIAL MOMENT, BUT RIGHT NOW WE HAVE A MISSION, OLD BUDDY.
OH, RIGHT! LIKE HE REMEMBERS WHAT THAT IS! LOOK, LET'S JUST GO GET IN THE #%+&#%@ CAR, OKAY?
LAST ONE OUT, SWITCH OFF THE WALLS.

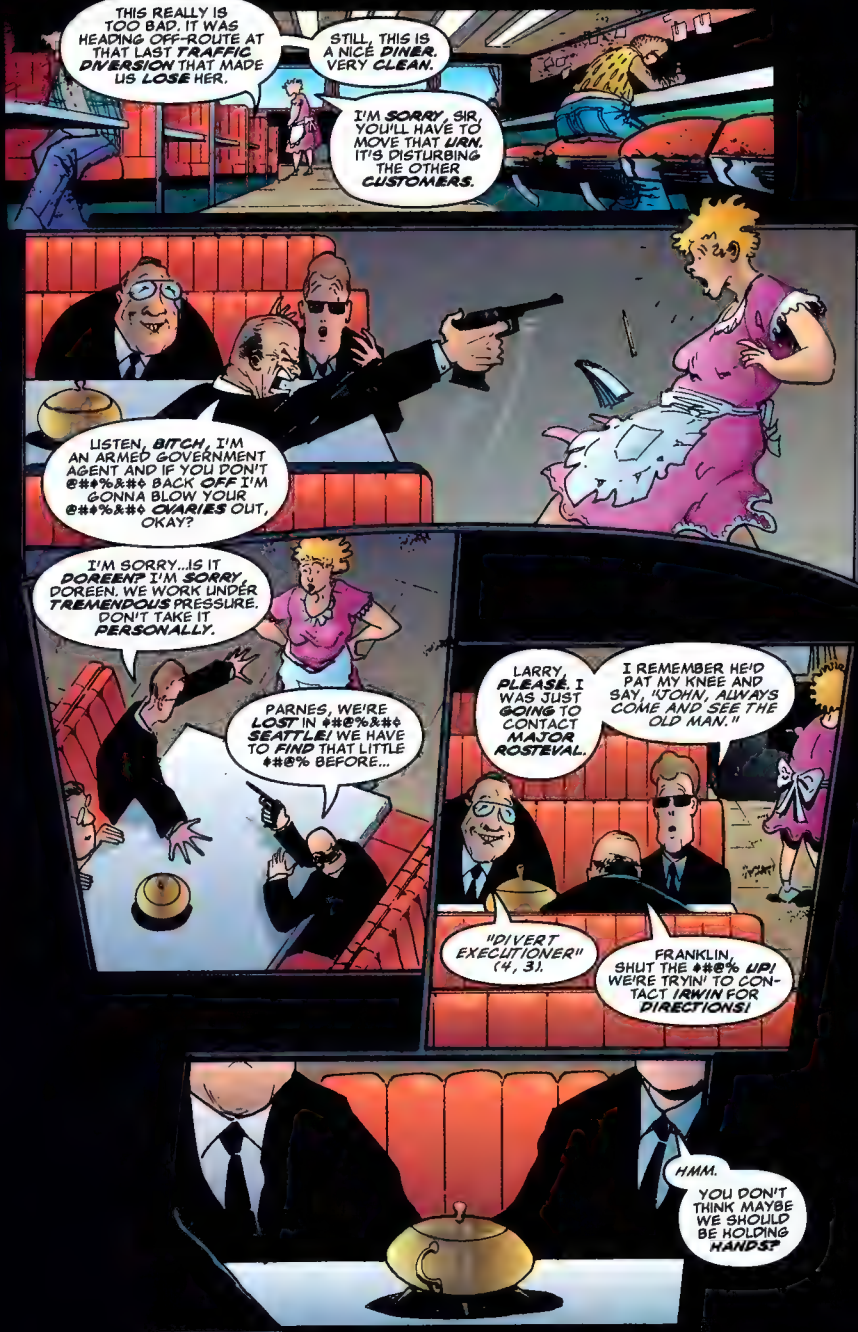
MEMORIAL
SO, ARE YOU DATING?
MOM, GET REAL. THE ONLY GUY WHO PAYS ME ANY ATTENTION IS THIS WINO I CALL NORBERT THE NAG.
MOM, HE'S A WINO. I DON'T MAKE EYE CONTACT. LISTEN, I HAVE TO FIND DAD...
IS HE HANDSOME?
YEAH, YOU SAID. THIS WELFARE THING.
WELL, THE LAST ADDRESS I HEARD WAS THE LOOSE END TRAILER PARK IN SEATTLE.
IF YOU FIND HIM, ASK HIM IF HE STILL HAS MY COCKNEY REBEL TAPE.

SARA, WAIT! WE REALLY GOTTA TALK!
SARA, HEY...
HAY IS FOR HORSES, NORBERT. DROP DEAD.
...MY BOY DUANE, HE'S IN THE ARMY. ONE O'THEM HOMOSEXUAL REGIMENTS, AIN'T THAT CUTE?
HE SAYS WE OUGHTA BE READY T'GIVE THEM TACO-TOSSERS HELL!
I GOT A PICTURE HERE...

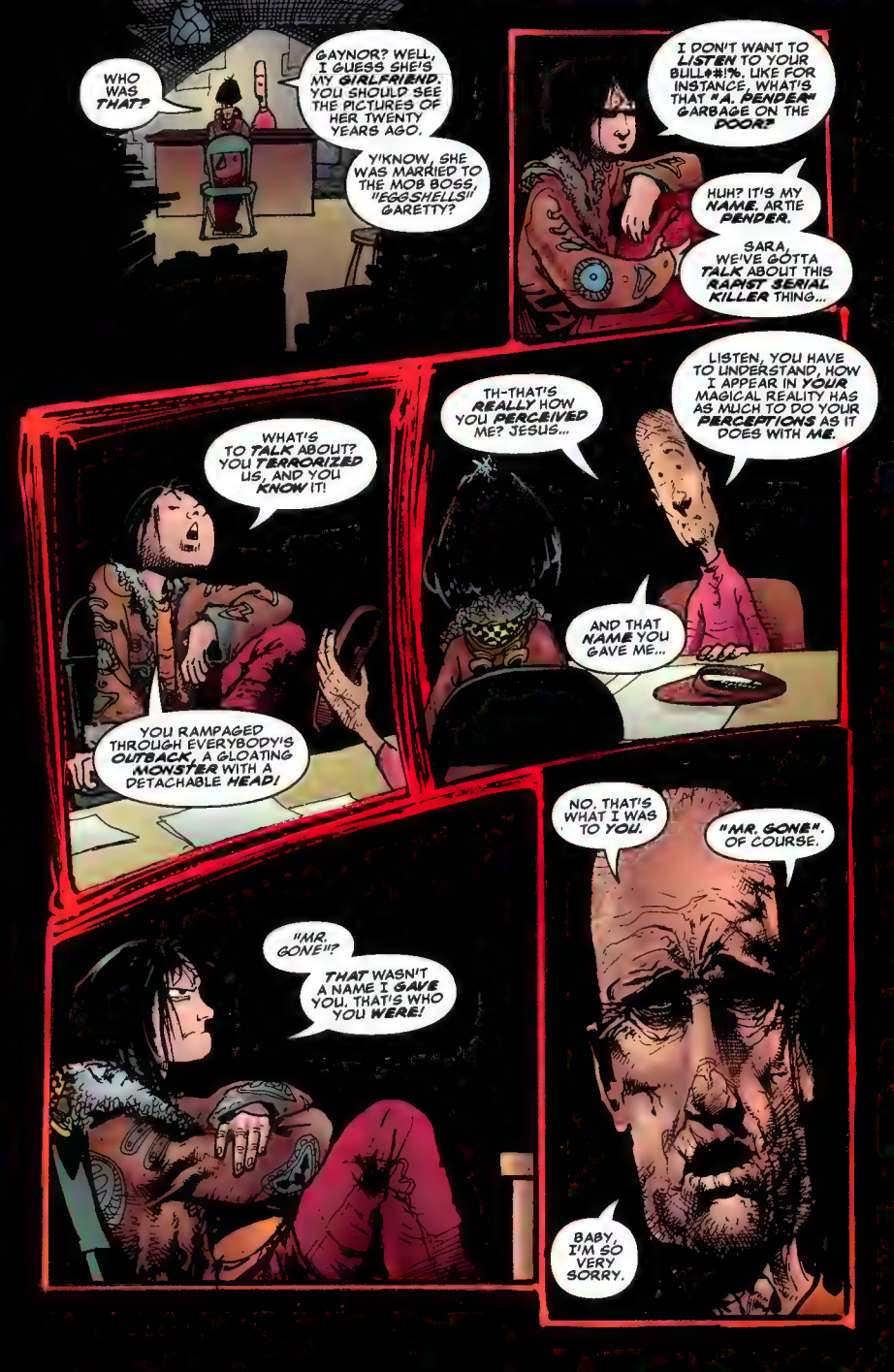
SEATTL
BUS DEPOT
LOOSE END
TRAILER PA

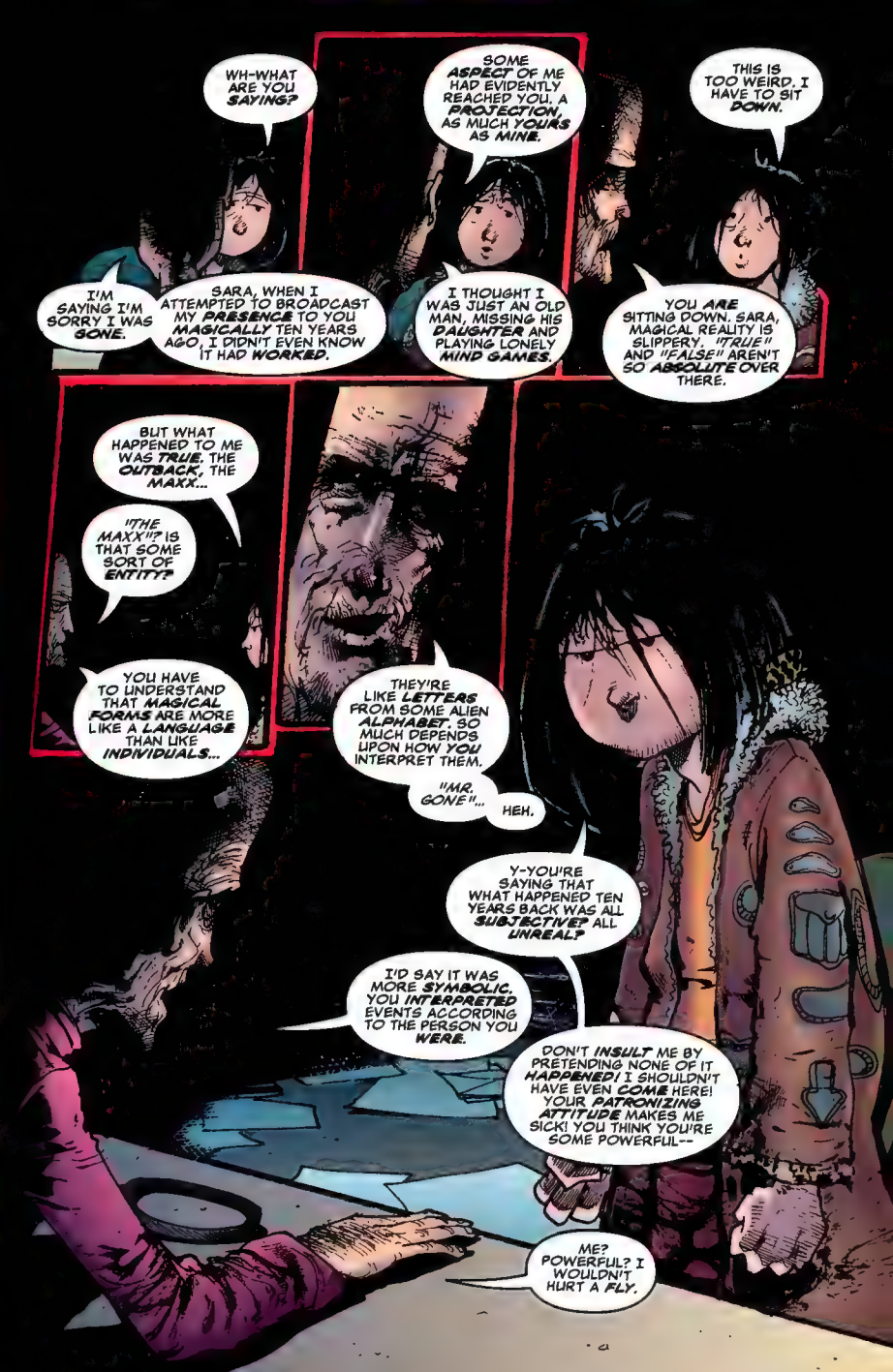

WHAT IS ALL THIS CRAP...?


OH, COME ON. THE MESS IN HERE ISN'T THAT BAD.
ACTUALLY, YOU'RE JUST IN TIME TO HELP ME WITH NINE ACROSS...
"DIVERT EXECUTIONER". FOUR LETTERS, THREE LETTERS.
IF IT HELPS, THE THIRD LETTER IS AN "A".

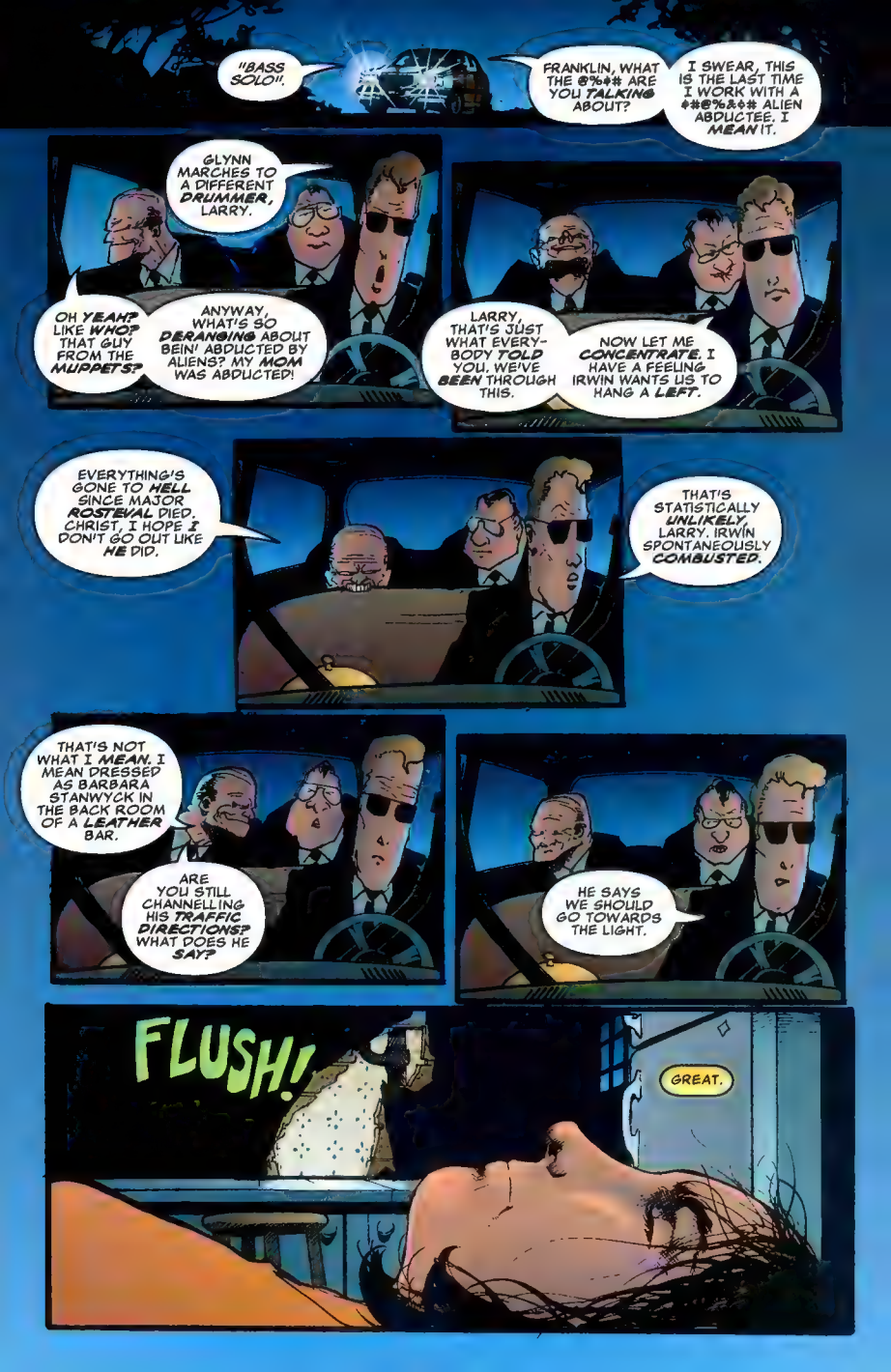

THIS REALLY IS TOO BAD. IT WAS HEADING OFF-ROUTE AT THAT LAST TRAFFIC DIVERSION THAT MADE US LOSE HER.
STILL, THIS IS A NICE DINER. VERY CLEAN.
I'M SORRY, SIR, YOU'LL HAVE TO MOVE THAT URN. IT'S DISTURBING THE OTHER CUSTOMERS.
LISTEN, BITCH, I'M AN ARMED GOVERNMENT AGENT AND IF YOU DON'T @##%&## BACK OFF I'M GONNA BLOW YOUR @##%### OVARIES OUT, OKAY?
I'M SORRY...IS IT DOREEN? I'M SORRY, DOREEN. WE WORK UNDER TREMENDOUS PRESSURE. DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY.
PARNES, WE'RE LOST IN ##@%&## SEATTLE! WE HAVE TO FIND THAT LITTLE ##@% BEFORE...
LARRY, PLEASE. I WAS JUST GOING TO CONTACT MAJOR ROSTEVAL.
I REMEMBER HE'D PAT MY KNEE AND SAY, "JOHN, ALWAYS COME AND SEE THE OLD MAN."
"DIVERT EXECUTIONER" (4, 3).
FRANKLIN, SHUT THE ##@% UP! WE'RE TRYIN' TO CONTACT IRWIN FOR DIRECTIONS!
HMM.
YOU DON'T THINK MAYBE WE SHOULD BE HOLDING HANDS?

SO. THEY WANT ME TO PAY YOUR WELFARE.
FRANKLY, HONEY, I'M NOT SURE I CAN...
DON'T "HONEY" ME. I FEEL TAINTED JUST BEING HERE, AFTER WHAT YOU DID...
WHAT I DID?
YEAH, YOU! TEN YEARS BACK, REMEMBER? MR. GONE, THE MAGIC RAPIST SERIAL KILLER! HE GETS DECAPITATED BUT HE KEEPS COMING BACK!
YOU SON OF A BITCH. YOU...
HELL-OH-EE? I THOUGHT I HEARD VOICES IN HERE!
THIS MUST BE THAT DAUGHTER YOU'RE ALWAYS MOONING OVER.
UH, YEAH. SARA, THIS IS GAYNOR.
HI, SWEETHEART. DON'T LISTEN TO A THING HE TELLS YA ABOUT ME, ARTIE. I'M GOING TO THE STORE. YOU NEED ANYTHING?
UH, YEAH. YEAH, GET ME A PACK OF TWINKIES...ARE THOSE LOW TAR? AW, BETTER MAKE IT HO-HO'S.
SURE THING. SEE YA LATER.
MY DOCTOR SAYS HO-HO'S.

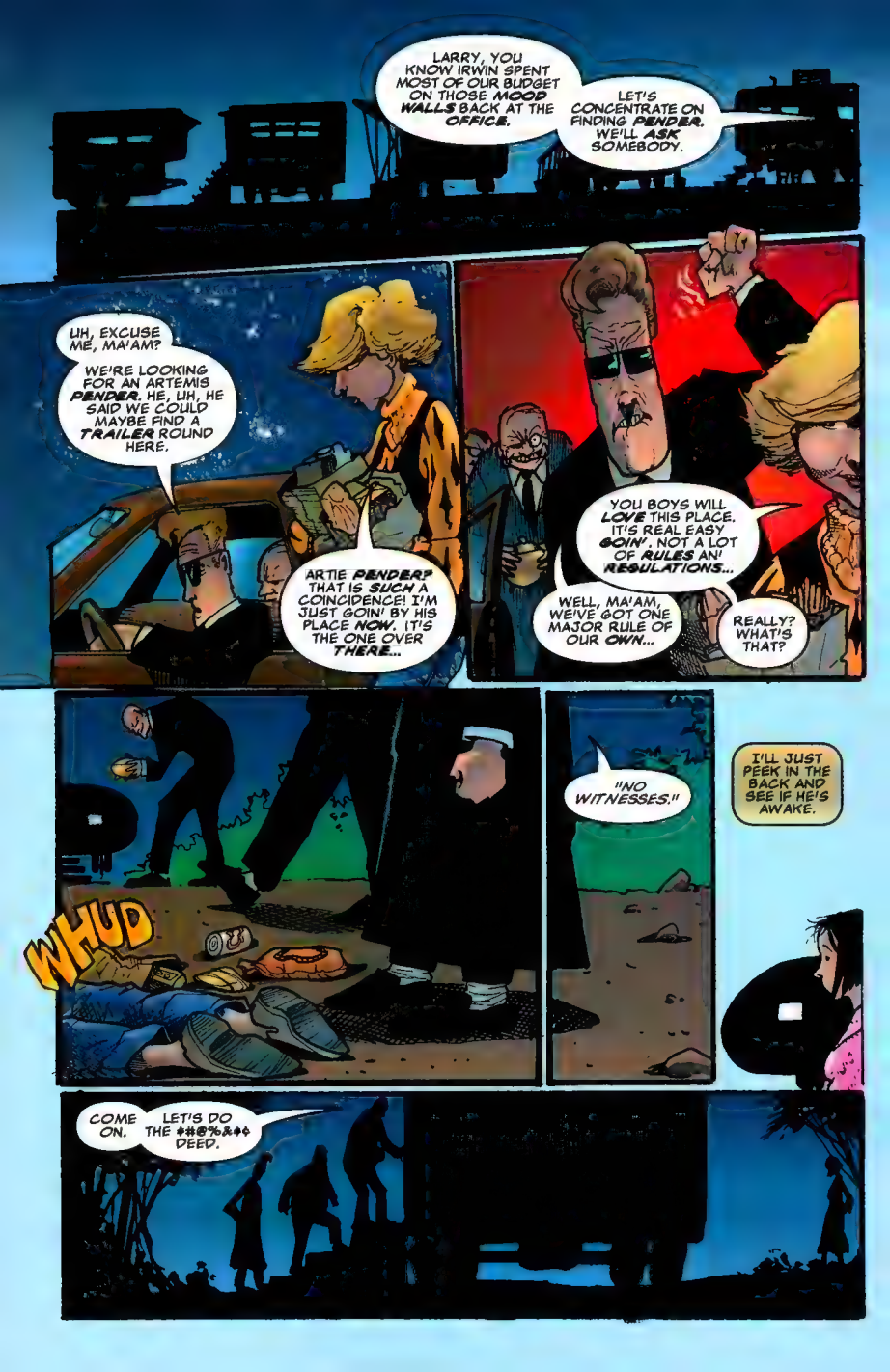

WHO WAS THAT?
GAYNOR? WELL, I GUESS SHE'S MY GIRLFRIEND. YOU SHOULD SEE THE PICTURES OF HER TWENTY YEARS AGO.
Y'KNOW, SHE WAS MARRIED TO THE MOB BOSS, "EGGSHELLS" GARETTY?
I DON'T WANT TO LISTEN TO YOUR BULL@#!%, LIKE FOR INSTANCE, WHAT'S THAT "A. BENDER" GARBAGE ON THE DOOR?
HUH? IT'S MY NAME, ARTIE BENDER.
SARA, WE'VE GOTTA TALK ABOUT THIS RAINST SERIAL KILLER THING...
LISTEN, YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND, HOW I APPEAR IN YOUR MAGICAL REALITY HAS AS MUCH TO DO YOUR PERCEPTIONS AS IT DOES WITH ME.
TH-THAT'S REALLY HOW YOU PERCEIVED ME? JESUS...
AND THAT NAME YOU GAVE ME...
WHAT'S TO TALK ABOUT? YOU TERRORIZED US, AND YOU KNOW IT!
YOU RAMPAGED THROUGH EVERYBODY'S OUTBACK, A GLOATING MONSTER WITH A DETACHABLE HEAD!
NO. THAT'S WHAT I WAS TO YOU.
"MR. GONE". OF COURSE.
"MR. GONE"?
THAT WASN'T A NAME I GAVE YOU. THAT'S WHO YOU WERE!
BABY, I'M SO VERY SORRY.

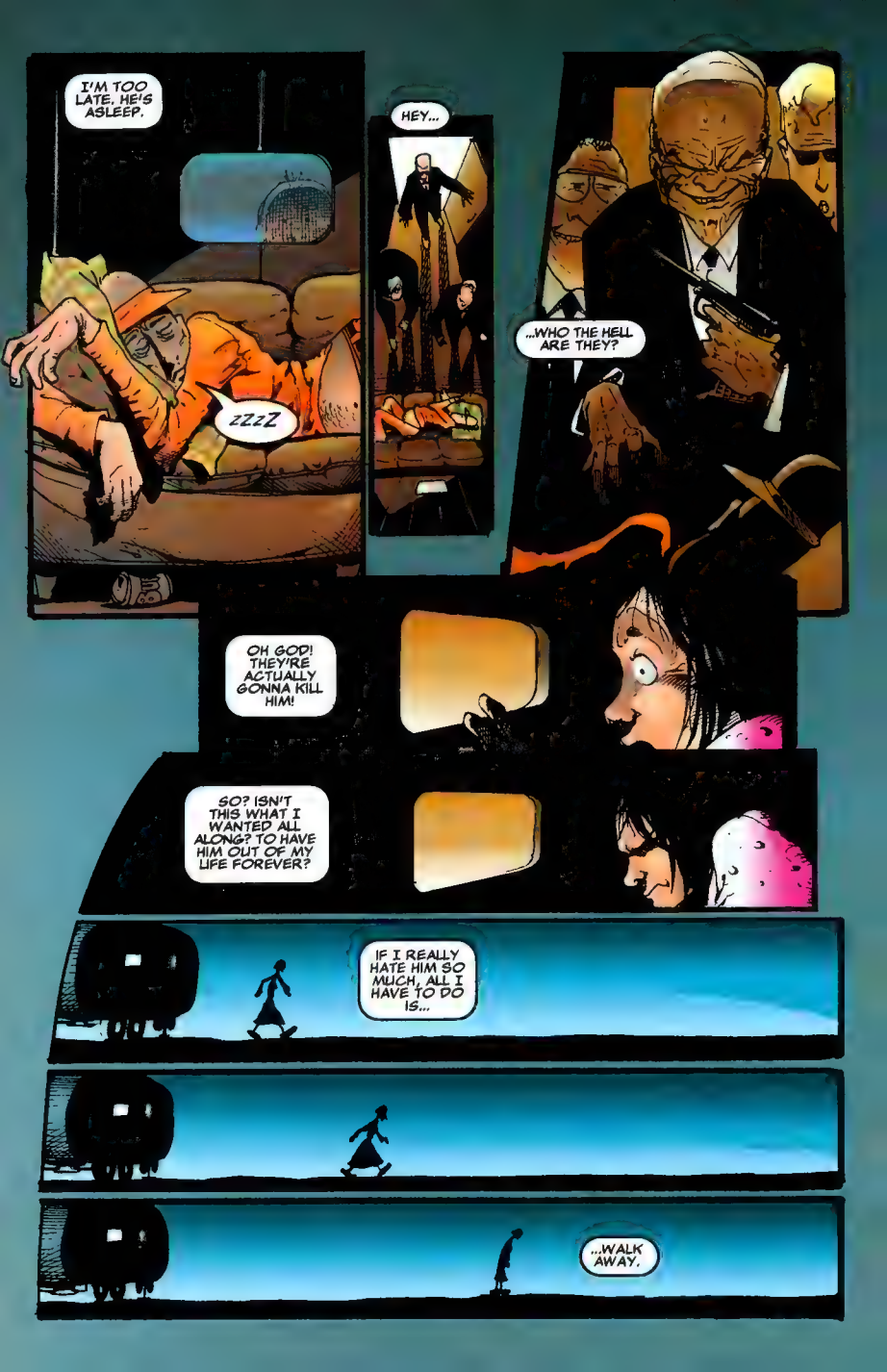

WH-WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I'M SAYING I'M SORRY I WAS GONE.
SARA, WHEN I ATTEMPTED TO BROADCAST MY PRESENCE TO YOU MAGICALLY TEN YEARS AGO, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT HAD WORKED.
SOME ASPECT OF ME HAD EVIDENTLY REACHED YOU. A PROJECTION, AS MUCH YOURS AS MINE.
I THOUGHT I WAS JUST AN OLD MAN, MISSING HIS DAUGHTER AND PLAYING LONELY MIND GAMES.
THIS IS TOO WEIRD. I HAVE TO SIT DOWN.
YOU ARE SITTING DOWN. SARA, MAGICAL REALITY IS SLIPPERY. "TRUE" AND "FALSE" AREN'T SO ABSOLUTE OVER THERE.
BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO ME WAS TRUE. THE OUTBACK, THE MAXX...
"THE MAXX"? IS THAT SOME SORT OF ENTITY?
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT MAGICAL FORMS ARE MORE LIKE A LANGUAGE THAN LIKE INDIVIDUALS...
THEY'RE LIKE LETTERS FROM SOME ALIEN ALPHABET. SO MUCH DEPENDS UPON HOW YOU INTERPRET THEM.
"MR. GONE"... HEH.
Y-YOU'RE SAYING THAT WHAT HAPPENED TEN YEARS BACK WAS ALL SUBJECTIVE? ALL UNREAL?
I'D SAY IT WAS MORE SYMBOLIC. YOU INTERPRETED EVENTS ACCORDING TO THE PERSON YOU WERE.
DON'T INSULT ME BY PRETENDING NONE OF IT HAPPENED! I SHOULDN'T HAVE EVEN COME HERE! YOUR PATRONIZING ATTITUDE MAKES ME SICK! YOU THINK YOU'RE SOME POWERFUL--
ME? POWERFUL? I WOULDN'T HURT A FLY.

YEAH, RIGHT. NONE OF THE PAIN YOU CAUSED ME OR MOM ALL THOSE YEARS AGO SEEMS TO HAVE EVEN REGISTERED IN YOU.
I HATE YOU! I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN! I HOPE YOU DIE A SLOW, LONG, PATHETIC DEATH!
I'D KILL YOU MYSELF IF I WASN'T SUCH A WIMP!
I DON'T WANT ANYTHING FROM YOU...
...LEAST OF ALL, YOUR MONEY.


"BASS SOLO".
FRANKLIN, WHAT THE @%## ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?
I SWEAR, THIS IS THE LAST TIME I WORK WITH A ##@%&## ALIEN ABDUCTEE. I *MEAN* IT.
GLYNN MARCHES TO A DIFFERENT *DRUMMER*, LARRY.
OH *YEAH?* LIKE *WHO?* THAT GUY FROM THE *MUPPETS?*
ANYWAY, WHAT'S SO *DERANGING* ABOUT BEIN' ABDUCTED BY ALIENS? MY *MOM* WAS ABDUCTED!
LARRY, THAT'S JUST WHAT EVERY-BODY *TOLD* YOU. WE'VE *BEEN* THROUGH THIS.
NOW LET ME *CONCENTRATE*. I HAVE A FEELING IRWIN WANTS US TO HANG A *LEFT*.
EVERYTHING'S GONE TO *HELL* SINCE MAJOR *ROSTEVAL* DIED. CHRIST, I HOPE *I* DON'T GO OUT LIKE *HE* DID.
THAT'S STATISTICALLY *UNLIKELY*, LARRY. IRWIN SPONTANEOUSLY *COMBUSTED*.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I *MEAN*. I MEAN DRESSED AS BARBARA STANWYCK IN THE BACK ROOM OF A *LEATHER* BAR.
ARE YOU STILL CHANNELLING HIS *TRAFFIC DIRECTIONS?* WHAT DOES HE *SAY?*
HE SAYS WE SHOULD GO TOWARDS THE LIGHT.
FLUSH!
GREAT.

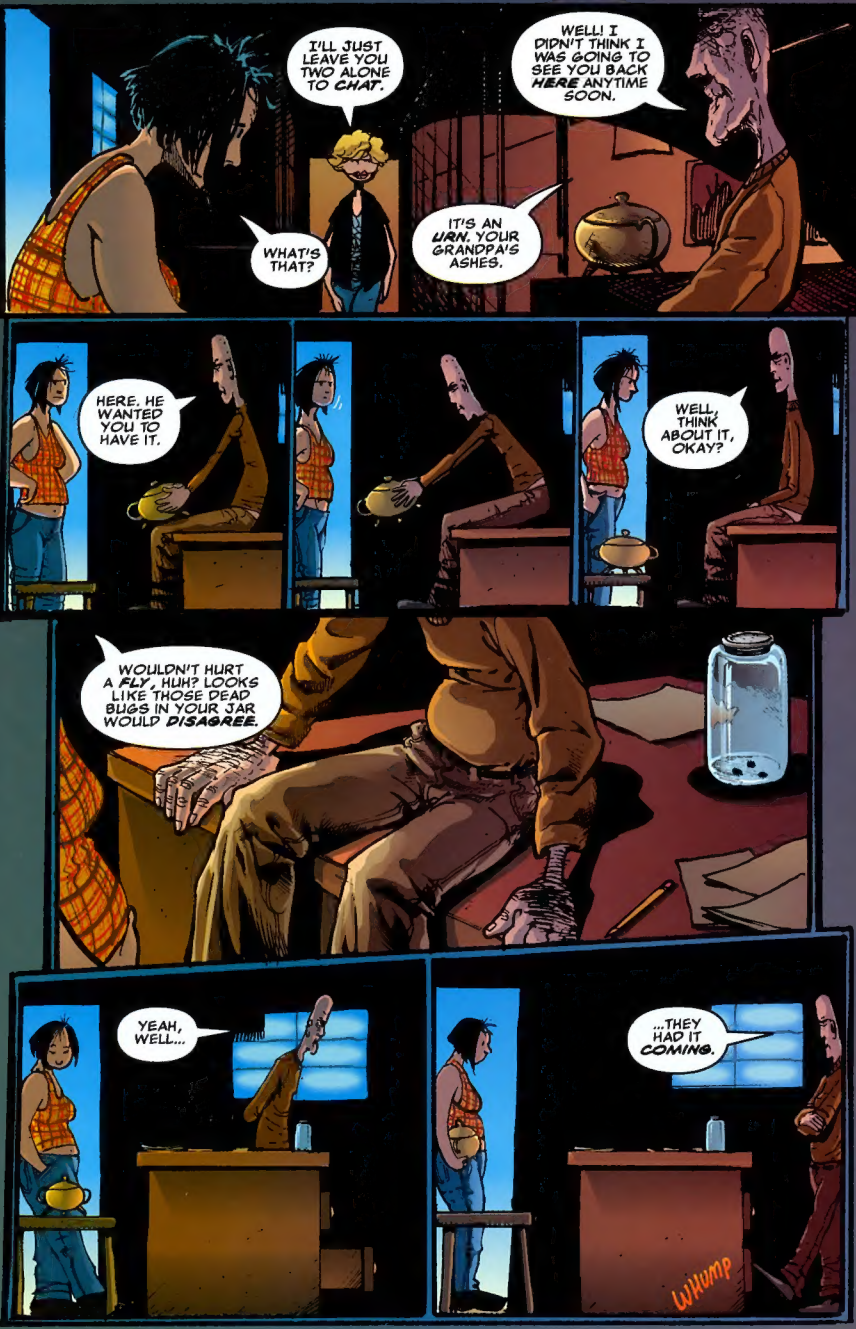
ONLY I WOULD FEEL GUILTY FOR YELLING AT A RAPIST.
THOUGH I HAVE THIS WEIRD FEELING...
...I SHOULD GO BACK AND SEE HIM.
LIKE SOMETHING'S UNFINISHED BETWEEN US.
I MEANT EVERYTHING I SAID, THOUGH.
REALLY.
LOOK AT THIS PIECE OF #*%& CAR! THE AGENCY IS @*%&! LAUGHING AT US, MAKING US DRIVE THIS!


LARRY, YOU KNOW IRWIN SPENT MOST OF OUR BUDGET ON THOSE MOOD WALLS BACK AT THE OFFICE.
LET'S CONCENTRATE ON FINDING PENDER. WE'LL ASK SOMEBODY.
UH, EXCUSE ME, MA'AM?
WE'RE LOOKING FOR AN ARTEMIS PENDER. HE, UH, HE SAID WE COULD MAYBE FIND A TRAILER ROUND HERE.
ARTIE PENDER? THAT IS SUCH A COINCIDENCE! I'M JUST GOIN' BY HIS PLACE NOW. IT'S THE ONE OVER THERE...
YOU BOYS WILL LOVE THIS PLACE. IT'S REAL EASY GOIN'. NOT A LOT OF RULES AN' REGULATIONS...
WELL, MA'AM, WE'VE GOT ONE MAJOR RULE OF OUR OWN...
REALLY? WHAT'S THAT?
WHUD
"NO WITNESSES."
I'LL JUST PEEK IN THE BACK AND SEE IF HE'S AWAKE.
COME ON.
LET'S DO THE ♦#@%&♦♦ DEED.


I'M TOO LATE. HE'S ASLEEP.
ZZZZ
HEY...
...WHO THE HELL ARE THEY?
OH GOD! THEY'RE ACTUALLY GONNA KILL HIM!
SO? ISN'T THIS WHAT I WANTED ALL ALONG? TO HAVE HIM OUT OF MY LIFE FOREVER?
IF I REALLY HATE HIM SO MUCH, ALL I HAVE TO DO IS...
...WALK AWAY.

WIMP
WIMP
WIMP
WIMP
OH GOD.
BLAM
I HATE MYSELF FOR NEEDING ANYONE, LEAST OF ALL A CREEP LIKE YOU.
OKAY, I LIED. I DO LOVE YOU, DADDY.
WIMP
WIMP
WIMP
I'M SORRY I WANTED YOU DEAD. PLEASE COME BACK.

DADDY...?
YOU'D THINK GOING OUT IN MY BATHROBE AND SLIPPERS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT WOULD TIP ME OFF THAT I WAS DREAMING.
MAN, WHAT A CREEPY DREAM. DROP DEAD, NORBERT.
BUT THERE'S STILL SOMETHING...
...I HAVE TO KNOW.
ARE YOU OKAY?
YEAH, I JUST NEED SOME ICE FOR MY FOREHEAD.
ARTIE, WHAT'D YOU DO WITH THEIR GUNS?
IN THE DESK DRAWER.
LISTEN, GAYNOR, LAST NIGHT I SAW INTO SARA'S DREAM. SHE DREAMED WHAT REALLY HAPPENED HERE.
SHE SAW WHAT YOU DID TO THEM?
NO. IN HER DREAM, THEY KILLED ME. SHE PAUSED--THEN TRIED TO SAVE ME--BUT WAS TOO LATE.
SO SHE WANTED YOU TO LIVE MORE THAN SHE WAS TEMPTED TO LET YOU DIE.


I'LL JUST LEAVE YOU TWO ALONE TO CHAT.
WELL! I DIDN'T THINK I WAS GOING TO SEE YOU BACK HERE ANYTIME SOON.
WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S AN URN, YOUR GRANDPA'S ASHES.
HERE. HE WANTED YOU TO HAVE IT.
WELL, THINK ABOUT IT, OKAY?
WOULDN'T HURT A FLY, HUH? LOOKS LIKE THOSE DEAD BUGS IN YOUR JAR WOULD DISAGREE.
YEAH, WELL...
...THEY HAD IT COMING.
WHUMP

SO, SARA, WHY ARE YOU HERE?
I DUNNO. I HAD THIS DREAM THAT I CAME TO SEE YOU LAST NIGHT, AND THESE THUGS BROKE IN, AND I SAW THEM KILL YOU.
AND YOU CAME TO SEE IF I WAS OKAY?
DON'T FLATTER YOURSELF. I GUESS I JUST CAME TO SAY GOODBYE.
SARA, IN THE DREAM...WHEN YOU SAW THEM ABOUT TO KILL ME, DID YOU TRY AND STOP THEM?
NO.

SHE LET ME DIE. SHE REALLY DOESN'T CARE.
I THINK SHE DOES.
NO. SHE DOESN'T.
NO MATTER HOW PISSED SHE IS RIGHT NOW...YOU SAW SHE CAME BACK TO SAVE YOU IN HER DREAM.
SHE STILL CARES.
GAYNOR, SHE LIED.
HONEY, THE ONLY ONE SHE WAS LYING TO...
...WAS HERSELF.